

TESTIMONY OF Allison Logan, BS-ED, MS

Public Hearing Testimony in Support of H.B. No. 6659 and the Governor's Proposed Elementary and Secondary Education budgets.

February 22, 2023

Dear Senator McCrory, Representative Felipe, Ranking Members Senator Berthel and Representative McCarty, and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Allison Logan and I am the CEO/Founder of Logan Consulting & Company and the former Executive Director of Bridgeport Prospers, a cradle to career, collective impact movement in Bridgeport, CT. I appreciate the opportunity to submit my written testimony for today's hearing. I stand in support of **H.B. No. 6659 and the Governor's Proposed Elementary and Secondary Education budgets**. I, and the pediatric community in Bridgeport, thank the Appropriations Committee for their appropriation of \$150k to Reach Out and Read in FY2022 and FY2023 and request that you continue this funding in the biennial budget at its previous level.

Over the last 6 years, my work in Bridgeport has focused in the prenatal to three space, with an outcome goal that all babies in Bridgeport will be healthy and reach developmental milestones by age three. Recognizing that there is scant evidence that any one single action, support or intervention will result in the level of family and systems change imagined for Bridgeport's babies, the birth to three community action team proposed an innovative, values-anchored, science-informed baby "bundle." The community identified five strategies necessary to reach the goal above. The first of these includes building a base of universal supports available to all parents with babies who live in the city, beginning prenatally or at birth. This included the successful expansion of a national evidence-based early literacy intervention, **Reach Out and Read**, available in settings providing well-child health care. Over the next several years, I am fortunate, in my current role, to be continuing the advancement of this nationally recognized framework throughout the state by partnering with The Pritzker Children's Initiative.

Reading regularly with a parent or other caregiver improves young children's language development, early reading achievement, and school readiness. When adults read with young children and engage them in rich conversations, children develop larger vocabularies, learn to read more easily, and grow stronger emotionally. Early language and literacy develop at the same time, beginning at birth, with both visual and vocal exchanges between a child and caregiver.<sup>i</sup> At the same time, reading with children depends on willing and able parents who have the internal and external resources to use books as a form of engagement with their children. Toxic levels of family stress, including parental depression can impair parents' capacity to read regularly with their young children. Research indicates that limited language skills and low literacy skills are a distinct social determinate of health and associated with lower educational attainment and worse health outcomes.<sup>ii</sup> While more than 74% of high-income parents with children under the age of six report having received advice that children should be read aloud to from birth, just 47% of parents in the lowest-income families have received this information.<sup>iii</sup>

**Reach Out and Read** is a universal, evidence-based program used in primary care offices to promote early literacy. During children's well-child visits, pediatricians encourage parents to read to their children, volunteers model shared book reading, and each child receives a new book appropriate to his or her age. Research reveals that participation in the program by low-income parents makes families more focused on reading, results in higher vocabulary scores among older children, and increases the amount that families read each week. Children ages six months to five years are eligible to participate in Reach Out

and Read, and nationwide 3.8 million children are served in 4,500 sites.<sup>iv</sup> Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics endorses the **Reach Out and Read** anticipatory guidance as pediatric best-practice for all children aged 0-5 in the Bright Futures guidelines.

Over the last few years, Bridgeport Prospers partnered with healthcare and increased the access to Reach Out and Read to both Federally Qualified Health Centers. The continuation of this funding in the biennial budget, would allow Bridgeport to continue and expand programs in the FQHC sites (currently ROR is in numerous Optimus Health Care and Southwest Community Health Center programs) and other clinics in the city and beyond.

In closing, I urge you to support **H.B. No. 6659 and the Governor's Proposed Elementary and Secondary Education budgets.**

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<sup>i</sup> *Reading with Children, Pathways to Third Grade Reading Working Brief, August 2017*

<sup>ii</sup> *The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Early warning! Why reading by the end of third grade matters*

<sup>iii</sup> *Reading with Children, Pathways Working Brief, August 2017*

<sup>iv</sup> *Reading with Children, Pathways to Third Grade Reading Working Brief, August 2017*